

Maintain the truth lovingly and always love truthfully.  
John Paul II

## CPO TV to Air **Fundamentals of Catholicism**

**PRESIDENT'S LETTER**

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*Dear Friends,*

It has been a busy and exciting year for Catholic Parents OnLine. Our popular video production, *A Parent's Guide: Teaching the Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, has done extremely well: over a thousand copies have been requested by Catholic bookstores, men's conferences, teachers, youth ministers and parents from all over the country. God answered our prayers when EWTN decided to air our film and now it has achieved international distribution. We've heard from people as far away as Spain and even Australia. People are saying: *We saw the DVD and it was awesome!! You really had a good line up of spokespeople!! Congratulations on this great project. What a blessing to have it viewed so widely. God is using your efforts in a mighty way.*

We are currently in the process of producing a Spanish version of our successful video as well. We are hopeful that this version will also be aired on EWTN this year and will be a valuable evangelization tool for the Hispanic communities and Latin America.

As most of you know we have an award winning local cable TV program which is aired on Metro Cable Network (channel 6) every Sunday from 9:30 to 10:00pm. This past year we've

aired 15 dynamic interviews, featuring each one of the people who starred in *A Parent's Guide: Teaching the Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*. These half-hour interviews are packed with inspiring information.

Our Mission is all about education and we are thrilled to announce that our future plan for CPO TV is to air the **Fundamentals of Catholicism** by Fr. Robert Altier. We plan to produce 52 new half-hour TV programs with Father which will be shown every Sunday evening on Metro Cable Network. This is a tremendous opportunity to reach thousands of fallen away or lukewarm Catholics by airing this exceptional series by Fr. Altier on secular cable TV.

Our new **Chaplet of Divine Mercy CD** features the beautiful voices of singing children and includes prolife meditations by Fr. Robert Altier.



Fr. Robert Altier, CPO Spiritual Director, at 2009 Fall Luncheon

This is an excellent way to pray for a Culture of Life! If you are on our email list you will receive notice when additional CDs are available.

The **CPO Website** continues to be a critical part of our Mission and it draws people from around the globe. We have a great three minute trailer of our video: *A Parents' Guide: Teaching the Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality* at [www.catholicparents.org](http://www.catholicparents.org) and more information on how to receive a copy of the DVD.

We also have the updated list of the **religious education series** and "sex ed." programs being used at most of the Catholic grade schools in our Archdiocese. We have provided this list along with many excellent reviews of the programs. This work continues to be gratefully received not only here but in distant parts of the nation: *Thank you for your input on the catechetical series, it is much appreciated! Thanks for all you do, it's so nice to have CPO as a source of guidance for Catholic educational materials.*



CPO Board Vice-President John Trojack

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Seating is limited, so **register early** for the annual **CPO Lenten Retreat** to held on **Saturday, March 20, 2010**. This year's theme is: *Silence in the Presence of the Lord*. The Retreat will be held at the beautiful Church of the Maternity of the Blessed Virgin in St. Paul, Minnesota. For more information and to register please see the flyer that is included in this newsletter.

God's Grace and your tremendous support has enabled us to continue our Mission: *To build a network of faithful, dynamic, and informed parents, students, and alumni, committed to working with Catholic schools, other programs of education and the community at large, to ensure the authentic teaching and protection of our Catholic Faith, and to address issues that undermine our Catholic Faith and Morals*. We are very grateful to all of you who donate financially, who volunteer, and especially for all your prayers! A Holy Mass is offered every month of the year for the intentions of our benefactors.

I hope to see you at the Lenten Retreat on March 20th!

*God bless you and yours in this New Year,  
Colleen Perfect*



CPO Board of Directors, left to right: Colleen Perfect, Fr. Robert Altier, Bob Tatreau, Richard Layer, Terese Jensen, Fred Blonigen, Joe Kolles, John Trojack, Marilyn Grutsch, Lisa Bromschwag and Kurt Virnig

## CPO Presence at *Putting on the Armor of God* Conference in Mendota Heights, November 2009



CPO Board Member Richard Layer, Colleen Perfect (CPO President) and Sister Jane de Chantal Smisek, VHM



2 Richard Layer, Colleen Perfect and Drew Mariani, Relevant Radio

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# The Love of the Heart of Jesus: Our Priests

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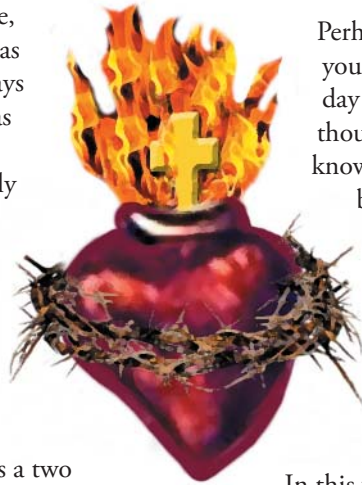
BY FR. ROBERT ALTIER, CPO SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR

Pope Benedict XVI stated that the priest is the love of the Heart of Jesus. This is an astounding statement that we have to consider in order to understand the importance of the Year for Priests. The love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus can be seen in all of the mysteries of His life from the moment of the Incarnation, through all of His teaching and working of miracles, until it is seen most perfectly on the Cross. There, being completely vulnerable, His Sacred Heart was pierced by a lance. The fact is, His heart was always vulnerable because of His love, and His Heart was broken over and over again by the lack of love shown to Him. The event on the Cross was simply an outward expression of the interior reality.

Perhaps more important than expressing our Lord's broken Heart, this action expresses the fact that our Lord's Heart is open to us, that it is never closed to us, even when we violate Him. Being always open to us implies that our Lord is ready at any time to receive us, but it also means that He is always giving. Love is a two way street: both giving and receiving. To demonstrate that He will not refuse us any good, He gives us the greatest good: Himself. This gift is given in and through the Priesthood.

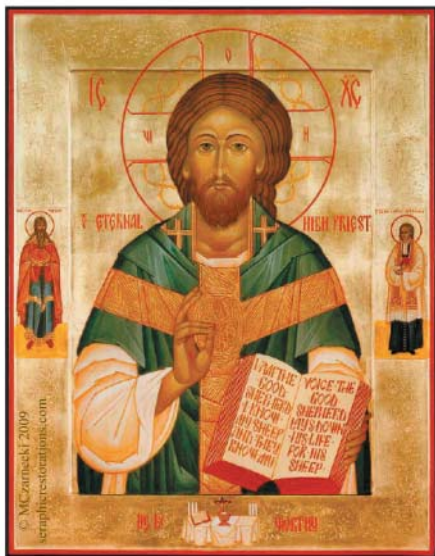
On the day of his ordination, a priest undergoes what is called an ontological change. This means that there is a change in his very *being* so that the priest now stands in the very person of Jesus Christ. Through the action of the Priesthood our Lord

continues the work He accomplished during His time on earth. In each of the Sacraments administered through the priest, it is Jesus Himself Who is acting. We see that the love of the Heart of Jesus did not stop on the Cross, but it continues today through the Sacraments and, therefore, through the person of the priest.



Perhaps you do not see the love of Jesus reflected in your pastor. First, recall that the people of His own day did not recognize the full truth about Jesus even though they saw Him daily. Second, the priests you know stand in the person of Jesus, but they do not become God. In other words, they are still weak, sinful human creatures. Each priest is called to true holiness, that is, to be transformed so as to become like Jesus in all things. If a priest is transformed in this manner, the love of Jesus should be easily recognized in Him. However, even if the love is not so easily recognized, the reality is still the same.

In this year dedicated to priests, pray for all the priests you know and those who have been part of your life (at baptism, confession, Mass, and so on) but pray especially for the priest(s) at your parish. In the Year of Families, Pope John Paul II challenged families to *become what you are*. In this Year of the Priest, challenge your pastor to do the same and help him with your prayers to become what he already is: the love of the Heart of Jesus.



YEAR FOR PRIESTS  
JUNE 19, 2009 - JUNE 19, 2010



Secretariat of Clergy,  
Consecrated Life and Vocations

## Please Pray for Priests

Dear Lord,

we pray that the Blessed Mother wrap her mantle around your priests and through her intercession strengthen them for their ministry.

We pray that Mary will guide your priests to follow her own words,  
"Do whatever He tells you" (Jn 2:5).

May your priests have the heart of St. Joseph, Mary's most chaste spouse.

May the Blessed Mother's own pierced heart inspire them to embrace all who suffer at the foot of the cross.

May your priests be holy, filled with the fire of your love seeking nothing but your greater glory and the salvation of souls.

Amen.

Saint John Vianney, pray for us and for all priests.

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# A God Campaign

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BY JULIE BLONIGEN

With the current status of our government and country, and with the plethora of immorality, especially of the sexual variety, in which our once God-centered country is now wallowing, I don't think anyone could argue that for a devoted person of faith—Catholic, Jewish, Protestant or other religious identity—living in today's society is more than a tad hellish. We all know that since God has been taken *out*, the Devil has brought hell *in*.

There are the obvious signs of hell (the Devil, sin) on earth: the murder of the innocent unborn; open homosexuality; fired employees machine gunning former co-workers at their workplace; hundreds killed in the “natural” disaster of floodwaters; beloved sons and daughters killed in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; a so-called health care bill that is so *uncaring* it promotes euthanizing the vulnerable, to name a few.

Then there are the more subtle signs of hell (the Devil, sin). These are the everyday struggles so often rooted in sinfulness which make us suffer. Things like the boss's lie that the Human Resources Director, a good Christian, is made to pass on to the employee or be fired; the rude lady cutting ahead of you in the grocery line; students afraid to walk to their cars on the college campus at night for fear of being attacked; or motorists passing by the elderly gentleman lying in the ditch bleeding to death.

Is it not the absence of the love of God, the lack of true charity, the lack of grace-filled natures, that create all these problems? Charitable behavior comes from exercising charity. People seem to spend more time exercising their bodies than their charity! More time is spent in teaching and reading and talking about god-less love (sex for the sake of sex) than in acting *with* love. A life without love is indeed hell. A culture without love is indeed hellish.

So what can be done? What can “little old me” do to diminish the Devil's work and increase God's kingdom on earth? If we are to be Christ's witnesses, planting the seeds of faith, and the leaven that transforms the bread of earth into Heavenly food, then we must immediately and aggressively (“assertively” will do for those who find aggressively too forceful) take concrete steps to make our increasingly secular, God-less culture more God-filled.

So it is I propose a God Campaign. A Campaign in which we all try to fill our part of the world with God. Our part of the world means our country, our state, our city, our neighborhood, our family, our home, our workplace, our people-to-people contacts, our phone line, our computer lines, our conversations. Throughout our simple daily lives there are countless opportunities to remind others that God exists. Just as St. Thérèse of

Lisieux paved her road to sainthood by simple acts of love, by her Little Way of doing small things for God with great love, we now can pave the way for returning America to God by doing little things each day to remind people that yes, Heaven exists, yes, there are still some of us who actually believe in God, and yes, life is truly hell without God.

It is really quite simple. We just have to bring God into as many conversations and places as possible and act as much like true Christians as we can. Be alert. Keep God on your mind. Be creative like the high school graduation class speaker who was banned from mentioning God in her speech but then arranged to sneeze during her talk so all the seniors could shout *God bless*. Show a joyful demeanor—saints are supposed to be happy (reputedly crabby St. Padre Pio and photographically dour St. Teresa of Avila excepted, but I personally excuse them in light of his suffering the stigmata and she with chronic headaches). Have fun with this Campaign. And get ready for some absolutely wonderful, totally surprising, and uplifting affirmations that YOU ARE NOT THE ONLY ONE IN THIS COUNTRY WHO STILL BELIEVES IN GOD!

Let me share with you a few personal experiences, then give you some ideas that should serve to spur your very own Campaign to spread the word of God.

The first action in my personal God Campaign just came about by “chance” (I use that word to let you know I didn't sit down and plan to do this, although

I know there is no such thing as chance but only Divine Providence). For some reason one day I just started saying *God bless you* instead of *goodbye* and *thank you* on the phone or in person to everyone from store clerks to friends. Sometimes on the phone there will be a few seconds of silence, with the person surprised to hear those words, then they respond *God bless you, too!* in the most cheerful, affirming voice. Only a handful of times has there been *dead* silence, indicating to me the person is either afraid over the phone for their employer to hear them using God's name, or they are not God-minded folk.

Another thing we've done originated in necessity. Per the health data privacy laws, I needed to establish an email for our household separate from that for my private practice in speech-language pathology which I operate in our home. Ah hah, I thought, why not make the address a religious one! It took a few attempts with the internet service to find one not already taken, then we were able to secure *wepraiseGod* as our address. Now everyone who receives and sends us emails has to praise



EMAIL ADDRESS: [wepraiseGod@aol.com](mailto:wepraiseGod@aol.com)

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God too! Even old Amazon.com, I'd bet NOT to their liking! We have had a number of positive comments about it, including an insurance company rep who noted that her son's email is a Biblical passage of some kind, adding, *We need to do this kind of thing today, don't you think?* That provided a wonderful opening for the two of us to share our thoughts on how Godless our society has become.

One more example—my favorite! A couple months ago I wanted to order new heel orthotics but long ago misplaced the catalog. Lo and behold, one day in the mail arrives the very catalog I needed. Immediately I called to place my order. After confirming my address and credit card, I told the customer service gentleman how I had lost the catalog, adding, *I just know my guardian angel sent your catalog just when I needed it.* Then in his deep, fifty-ish, Black dialect voice he said to me, *Ma'am, God takes care of His own.* Then he hung up! Now, months later, when I start worrying about how something is possibly going to work out, I say to myself, *Ma'am, God takes care of His own.* What an instant reward I got on that one!

You can see how very simple it is to spread the word! Now let me give you some more ideas to spur you into action on your own God Campaign! Some things you may already be doing. If so, great! Keep it up and encourage others to do likewise.

#### Replace frequently used secular phrases with religious ones.

- *Instead of saying 'good bye' on the telephone, say 'God bless you.'*
- *Say 'Have a blessed day' rather than 'Have a good day.'*
- *When making an appointment, confirm the time and day by saying, 'I'll see you Tuesday at 3:00, God willing.'*
- *In leaving a voice mail message on another's phone, do what CPO member Nancy Barrett does. Begin by saying, 'Praise be Jesus Christ. This is...'*

#### Place religious symbols and messages on your property.

- *Tired of all those purple Viking flags sticking out of windows? Have your local banner shop make one with a religious message such as 'God Lives' or 'God Reigns' or 'God First.'*
- *Next to that Beware of the Dog sticker on your front door, place a religious decal such as the Divine Mercy Jesus or a picture of the Holy Family.*
- *Get your local print shop to make up several lawn signs with a religious message and distribute them to like-minded friends and family to put in their front lawns. Locally someone did this and it was a joy to drive around and see signs saying 'Remember to Pray' and 'Follow the Ten Commandments.'*
- *Next to that wonderful 'Save the unborn humans' pro-life sticker, attach a God-message bumper sticker like 'My boss is a Jewish carpenter.'*
- *Don't forget to have plenty of religious art and statues in your home. The first thing a stranger should see when he enters your home is something that tells him you are a Christian and not afraid to show it.*

#### Be on your guard to act like a Christian at all times.

- *Don't give witness to G.K. Chesterton's famous saying 'The best argument against Christianity is Christians.'*
- *When the store clerk fails to greet you and is a bit rude and*

*short, try a little empathy by saying, 'You look worn out. I bet you're having a hard day. I'm sorry! Hope God gives you a better day tomorrow.'*

- *Ladies, make certain your conversational partner doesn't have to stare at your bare skin exposed by a low cut top to see your crucifix necklace.*
- *A rude gesture, facial expression or comment to that driver who just cut in front of you is not a good witness when your bumper sticker says, 'Respect Life.'*

#### Wear religious symbols or message clothing.

- *When someone compliments you on the item, you can say something like, 'Thank you. I think it's so important to be proud to be Christian in this secular culture, don't you?'*

#### Make the Sign of the Cross frequently, any and everywhere.

- *Making this beautiful religious gesture slowly and carefully is important. It can be made every time one passes by a Catholic church, but also when one drives by that neighbor's house as a prayer for their re-version to the Catholic church, or when passing by that house on your way to work that has a pro-abortion candidate's sign on the lawn. My husband and I have been doing this for one neighbor for years. Imagine my joy when the woman announced one day as I gave her a ride across the bridge that 'John (not his real name) and I finally got married after all those years living in sin together.' We're not sure she's returned to the Church, so we continue to make the Sign of the Cross and pray for her each time we go by her house.*

#### Say before and after meal prayers in public.

- *Don't be afraid to bow your heads and make the Sign of the Cross.*

#### Have religious symbols on your return address labels and checks.

- *You can also write your own message on envelopes in nice bold, black ink, such as Keep God in America.*

#### Compliment moms and dads who are having babies.

- *On a walk through the park it's easy to say to that dad holding an infant, 'It's great to see a man holding a baby! Thanks for having kids, God's gift to us all!'*
- *In a restaurant, take a second to stop by the table where five kids are sharing a meal with their parents and tell them they will be blessed by God for being so unselfish in having such a beautiful large family.*

As you can see, there is a myriad of opportunities to share your faith in God without being pushy or obnoxious. And don't worry if some of these activities are too bold for you right now. Begin with the ones that most suit your personality and daily routine. You'll find it becomes easier the more often you perform even the tiniest of these God-filled behaviors.

As our beloved and great John Paul II said, *Be Not Afraid.* You won't go to jail (yet) or break any Commandments by using God's name in *these* veins. Rather, you will surely be rewarded—maybe even made a saint like St. Teresa of Calcutta who urged us all to *Do something beautiful for God.* To which another Teresa, St. Thérèse of Lisieux, might add: *It can be something little.*

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# Loving Jesus With the Heart of Mary

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BY MARILYN GRUTSCH

What prayer is described by St. Louis de Montfort as a priceless treasure inspired by God, by Pope Leo XIII as the most excellent form of prayer, and referred to by St. Padre Pio as his weapon? St. Pius X calls it the prayer that touches most the heart of the mother of God and Pope John Paul II professed it as his favorite prayer. These people were all speaking of the Rosary, a universally treasured devotion in the Catholic Church. There is no shortage of material written about the Rosary: its history from praying the Psalms to its present day form of prayers; people who have revered this devotion down through the ages, and the many miracles associated with the Rosary.

It probably dates back to the second century, when the laity, most who could not read, wanted to imitate the monks who daily prayed the 150 Psalms. Fifty or 150 “Aves” were instead prayed, counting the prayers with stones or knots in a rope. Over time, this meditation evolved into its present form, which many say was introduced by St. Dominic in the 1100’s. What I discovered in my research was that even though I have been praying the Rosary for decades (no pun intended), I did not even begin to have a full appreciation of this blessed devotion until I began reading what the holy men and women who lived before us had to say about it. The voices of those who have promoted the Rosary date back to its beginning and continue into the present age.

As early as the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Pope Urban IV wrote this about the Rosary:

*There is a pious rite which, to be protected against the dangers threatening the world, consists in reciting the Ave Maria as many times as the Psalms of David, while saying before each decade the dominical prayer. With our Apostolic authority, we approve this Psalter of the Virgin.*

It is unusual to read about the lives of any saint or pope and not find fondly spoken support of meditating on the most holy Rosary. Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) is referred to as the Pope of the Rosary. He once explained it as the road to God: *From the human race to the Mother, from the Mother to the Son, and from the Son to the Father.*

Pope John XXIII (1958-1963) tells us:

*The Rosary is the glory of the Roman Church. It takes its place after the Mass and the Sacraments. It is a magnificent and universal prayer for the needs of the Church, the nations and the entire world. I propose to recite all fifteen decades of the Rosary every day, if possible in the chapel before the Blessed Sacrament.*

St. Padre Pio said: *Love the Madonna and pray the Rosary, for her*

*Rosary is the weapon against the evils of the world today. Our Lady has never refused me a grace through the recitation of the Rosary.*

St. Louis de Montfort, who had a particular devotion to Our Blessed Mother, offers this great hope to sinners:

*If you say the Rosary faithfully until death, I do assure you that, in spite of the gravity of your sins, you shall receive the never-fading crown of glory. Even if you are on the brink of damnation, even if you have one foot in Hell, even if you have sold your soul to the devil as sorcerers do who practice black magic, and even if you are a heretic as obstinate as a devil, sooner or later you will be converted and will amend your life and will save your soul, if—and mark well what I say—if you say the Holy Rosary devoutly every day until death for the purpose of knowing the truth and obtaining contrition and pardon for your sins.*

Our current Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI says this of the Rosary: *We desire to welcome the Virgin’s maternal request, committing ourselves to saying the Rosary with faith for peace in our families, in countries, and in the whole world.* He also invites newlyweds to make the praying of the Rosary in the family a moment of spiritual growth under the maternal gaze of the Virgin Mary. Blessed Mother Teresa describes the Rosary as *Loving Jesus with the heart of Mary.*

Our beloved Pope John Paul II had so much to say about devotion to the Rosary that he proclaimed the time from October 2002-October 2003 to be The Year of the Rosary.

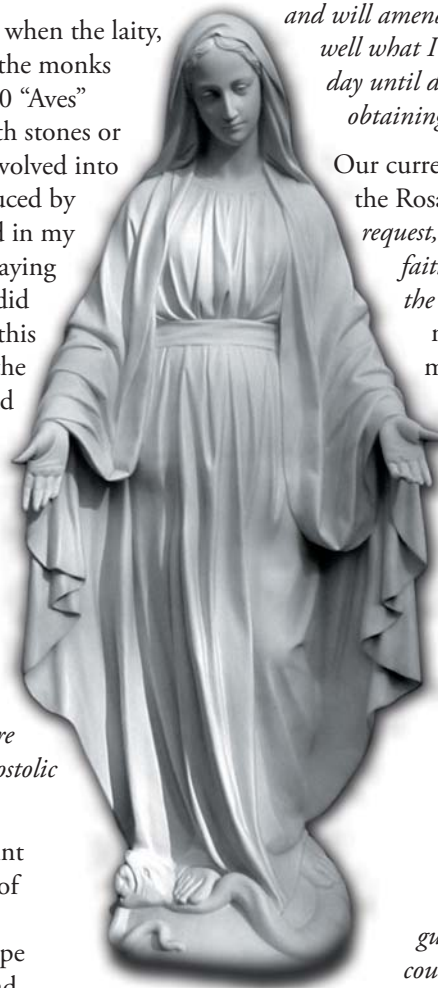
He also wrote the apostolic letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae, (On the Most Holy Rosary)* in which he added another meditation called the Mysteries of Light, filling the gap in the time of Christ’s life between His Hidden Life and His Passion:

*The Rosary of the Virgin Mary, which gradually took form in the second millennium under the guidance of the Spirit of God, is a prayer loved by countless saints and encouraged by the Magisterium. Simple yet profound, it still remains at the dawn of this third millennium, a prayer of great significance, destined to bring forth a harvest of holiness.*

He explains that the objections to praying the Rosary stem from it not being handed down to our young people and it therefore risks being wrongly devalued by them.

He addresses the criticism of the repetitive nature of the prayer, comparing it to spouses professing their love to each other many times throughout the day:

*If this repetition is considered superficially, there could be a temp-*



tation to see the Rosary as a dry and boring exercise. It is quite another thing, however, when the Rosary is thought of as an out-pouring of that love which tirelessly returns to the person loved with expressions similar in their content but ever fresh in terms of the feeling pervading them.

Our Blessed Mother herself, when she appeared to the children of Fatima petitioned them, *Say the Rosary every day to obtain peace for the world.* In Lourdes in 1858, she revealed the two things needed to save France: penance and the Rosary. Other Marian apparitions include her plea to the people to pray the Rosary to help with all our trials in this world.

Many miracles have been attributed to the devout recitation of the Rosary. One that occurred in 1571 at the Battle of Lepanto had an effect on an entire country when the Turks were over-running Europe and threatening to destroy Christianity. Pope St. Pius V organized a Rosary Crusade, asking Catholics everywhere to pray the Rosary. On October 7<sup>th</sup>, the vastly outnumbered Christian fleet defeated the mighty Turkish Armada and Christianity was saved. In 1573, Pope Gregory XIII issued *Monet Apostolus*, instituting the solemnity of the Feast of the Holy Rosary on October 7<sup>th</sup>, in memory of this miraculous victory. Countless others have attested to personal miracles as a result of praying the Rosary: conversions, Rosary chains turning gold, and averting near-miss accidents or catastrophes. In my own life, there have been little “miracles,” such as times when my teenagers were late coming home at night, when I would get up and pray the Rosary and the minute I said the final prayer, their car entered our driveway.

The evidence of miracles and testimonies is a strong message of the power and graces of the Rosary. Saying the Rosary is a good first step, but even for those of us who try to incorporate this prayer in our daily lives, how do we discipline ourselves to really “pray” it and not be caught up in all the distractions of the world? Should we be contemplating the words of the prayers, our intentions, or the mysteries? Sometimes I think our family has fallen prey to the practice Pope Paul VI described,

*Without contemplation, the Rosary is a body without a soul, and its recitation runs the risk of becoming a mechanical repetition of formulas, in violation of the admonition of Christ: ‘In praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think they will be heard for their many words’; Mt 6:7*

St. Ignatius teaches us to *Just look at the scenes of Our Lord’s life without trying to pull out all kinds of lessons and applications to your life.* One of the most meaningful Rosaries I’ve ever prayed was meditating on the Sorrowful Mysteries when watching the movie *The Passion of Christ.*

Pope John Paul II offers this guidance to help us truly meditate on the mysteries:

*Announce each mystery, and perhaps even using a suitable icon to portray it ... it is helpful to follow the announcement with the proclamation of a related Biblical passage ... then pause (in silence) and focus one’s attention for a suitable period of time on the mystery*

*before continuing on with the decade.*

In our busy lives, sometimes prayer can be tabled for what we mistakenly consider to be more important things, or we save our prayer time for the end of the day when we then find it hard to concentrate because we are too tired.

*The crisis of the Rosary doesn’t come first. What comes first is the crisis in prayer in general today. People are all taken up in material interests; they think little about the soul... For the interior life, and for the tender colloquy with God...it is too tiring to find a few minutes of time. What a pity!*  
John Paul I

Let us instead follow the advice of two holy men of God:

*Kings and princes, however burdened with most urgent occupations and affairs, made it their duty to recite the Rosary. The fathers and mothers of families particularly must give an example to their children, especially when, at sunset, they gather after the day’s work, within the domestic walls, and recite the Holy Rosary on bended knees before the image of the Virgin.* Pope Pius XI, 1922-1939

*The home of the Christian family, like that of Nazareth, will become an earthly abode of sanctity, and, so to speak, a sacred temple, where the Holy Rosary will not only be the particular prayer which everyday rises to heaven in an odor of sweetness, but will also form the most efficacious school of Christian discipline and Christian virtue. There is no surer means of calling down God’s blessings upon the family than the daily recitation of the Rosary.*

Pope Pius XII, 1939-1958



## ARTHUR A. HERKENHOFF AWARD

Art Herkenhoff was a true friend and one of CPO's founding Board members. He was a hero in all the areas that truly matter: in Faith, Family and Pro-life involvement. Art had enormous courage in the face of opposition to proclaim the Truth of Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church, and he always exhibited true charity, humility and joy.

Each year CPO receives many outstanding nominations for the Arthur A. Herkenhoff Award. For the past five years the CPO Board of Directors has had the difficult task of choosing one Catholic person to receive this award. The following exceptional individual was chosen for 2009.

The 2009 Arthur A. Herkenhoff Award was presented to a very worthy recipient, **Tom Smolik**.



Colleen Perfect (CPO President), Tom Smolik and his wife, Sandy Smolik



During the award ceremony, Art's oldest grand-daughter, Lydia Olund, age 14 and the 2<sup>nd</sup> oldest of 7 children, shared some of her fond thoughts and memories of her beloved grandfather. It was a highlight of the day!



Left to right are Lydia Olund (grand-daughter), Anne Herkenhoff Olund, Bridget Herkenhoff Thauwald, Colleen Perfect, Mary Herkenhoff Mattheisen, Mrs. Kathy Herkenhoff, Tom Smolik, Laureen Herkenhoff Cornelius, Elizabeth Herkenhoff, Katie Herkenhoff Wrobel, and Meghan Herkenhoff Habisch

The Board of Directors of Catholic Parents OnLine seeks the names of individuals who would be worthy of nomination for the 2010 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Arthur A. Herkenhoff Award. The persons nominated should exhibit the same qualities, principles and values which characterized the life and person of Art Herkenhoff: Faith, family, pro-life involvement, courage, charity and joy. This year's award will be presented at the CPO Annual Fundraising Luncheon to be held on Saturday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**Please submit your nomination by October 1, 2010. You may complete the Online Nomination Form at: [www.catholicparents.org/herkenhoff/index.html](http://www.catholicparents.org/herkenhoff/index.html) or contact us at 651-705-5409 and we'll be happy to mail you the form!**



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# Whatever Happened to Hell?

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BY FREDERICK BLONIGEN

It seems as though the word “hell” has been removed from the Catholic lexicon. Over the past forty-four years since the conclusion of Vatican II, most Catholics could list on one hand the number of times that they have even heard a priest mention the word “hell,” let alone deliver a Sunday homily on the subject. The four last things and other eschatological themes used to be standard fare for Sunday homilies or sermons. But rarely are such homilies heard in Catholic churches today. And yet there are undoubtedly numerous souls in heaven this moment because when they lived on earth they possessed a healthy sense of God’s justice and genuine fear of the eternal consequences of dying in the state of mortal sin.

The truth cannot change. What the Catholic Church has taught about the reality of hell since the time of the Apostles, She continues to teach today. The new Catholic Catechism could not be clearer about this matter: *To die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God’s merciful love means remaining separated from him forever by our own free choice. This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called ‘hell.’* (#1033). The Catechism, reminding us that Jesus speaks often of Gehenna and the “unquenchable fire,” then says:

*The teaching of the Church affirms the existence of hell and its eternity. Immediately after death the souls of those who die in the state of mortal sin descend into hell, where they suffer the punishments of hell, ‘eternal fire.’ The chief punishment of hell is eternal separation from God in whom alone man can possess the life and happiness for which he was created and for which he longs.* (#1035)

The reality of hell needs to be preached again today not because the Church is trying to frighten people or burden them with undue anxiety but because it is the solemn vocation of the Catholic Church to teach the fullness of truth, and the reality of hell is a revealed truth.

Sadly, today large numbers of Catholics and other Christians, due to little or no solid catechesis, are influenced by the dangerously false belief that because God is love, virtually no one can lose his or her soul. This is the sin of presumption. One does not reach heaven merely by saying, *I believe in God*: one must obey the Ten Commandments, repent of all mortal sins, and die in the state of grace. Today vast numbers of nominal Christians need to be told from the pulpit that mortal sins such as missing Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation, using contraceptives, supporting or participating in abortion, defending and/or engaging in homosexual behavior, using pornography, or living together outside of marriage jeopardize a person’s salvation.

God, of course, desires the salvation of every human soul; that is why He created each one of us: for eternal communion with Him in heaven. But God will not force His love upon anyone, for He has made us free and we must choose our eternal destiny. Do we want to do God’s will and share in His divine life or do we want to have it our way and do our will, not His? The consequence of choosing our will over God’s is ultimately choosing hell.

When we read the lives of the saints, one of the most striking characteristics of these holy men and women is their profound awareness of the gravity of sin and the terrible possibility of losing one’s soul by dying in the state of serious sin. How ironic that the very persons whom one would think would be most confident of gaining eternal life were intensely aware of the eternal consequences of choosing self over God. The saints

believe deeply in God’s infinite mercy but they also recognize His infinite justice.

In an often quoted line, C.S. Lewis once said that in the end there are only two kinds of persons: those who say to God *Thy will be done* (they reach heaven) and those to whom

God finally says, after a lifetime of

pursuing them with His love, *Have it your way* (they choose hell). The wonderful gift of freedom must be used to embrace and live the truth; if it is not used rightly, freedom can lead to man’s destruction, both in this life and in the life to come.

In one of his greatest books, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, Pope Benedict XVI, in discussing man’s particular judgment at death, speaks movingly about how Christ does not allot damnation but that each man becomes his own judgment:

*Christ inflicts pure perdition on no one. In himself he is sheer salvation. Anyone who is with him has entered the space of deliverance and salvation. Perdition is not imposed by him, but comes to be wherever a person distances himself from Christ. It comes about whenever someone remains enclosed within himself. Christ’s word, the bearer of the offer of salvation, then lays bare the fact that the person who is lost has himself drawn the dividing line and separated himself from salvation.*

If the gospel of Christ is to save souls it must be preached in its entirety. Failing to teach the fullness of God’s truth for fear that someone might be offended is not evangelization; it is cowardice. We need bishops, priests and deacons today who possess the courage of their convictions and who are not afraid to preach and teach the so-called “hard truths.” One of those “hard truths” is the reality of hell. And the understanding that

**Hell is wanting only to be oneself; what happens when man barricades himself up in himself.**

*Pope Benedict XVI*

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every human being will, by his free choice, decide whether he or she will spend eternity with God or without Him.

Pope Benedict XVI, in discussing hell in his recent work, *Credo for Today: What Christians Believe*, says, *The depths we call hell man can only give to himself. Indeed, we must put it more pointedly: Hell consists in man's being unwilling to receive anything, in his desire to be self sufficient. It is the expression of enclosure in one's own being alone. These depths accordingly consist by nature of just this: that man will not accept, will not take anything but wants to stand entirely on his own feet, to be sufficient unto himself. If this becomes utterly radical, then man has become untouchable, the solitary, the reject. Hell is wanting only to be oneself; what happens when man barricades himself up in himself.*

Hell is an unpleasant subject to think about, but think about it we must, for it is real. And reflecting on the possibility of hell for anyone who fails to repent of all mortal sins before death is a healthy spiritual exercise. In *Journal of a Soul*, by Pope John XXIII, it is said that the following words, which he learned as a young man and remembered always, were framed and hanging on the wall of his parish priest. Pope John XXIII used as his motto *The Four Future Things*. We would all be wise to make it our own motto for life.

*Let whoever longs to attain the hoped for life in heaven read frequently on earth these words of warning:*

*Three Past Things*

The evil done  
The good left undone  
The time wasted

*Three Present Things*

The shortness of life  
The difficulty of saving your soul  
The few who will be saved

*Four Future Things*

Death, than which nothing is more certain.  
Judgment, than which nothing is more strict.  
Hell, than which nothing is more terrible.  
Paradise, than which nothing is more delightful.



Father Robert Altier at Church of Saint John in Saint Paul,  
Lenten Retreat, March 2009

Board Member Bob Tatreau and his wife, Pat,  
serve joyfully at the Lenten Retreat lunch



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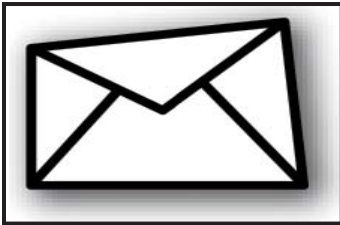
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## From the CPO Mailbag

*It is great getting this information from you and having something concrete to show others who cannot understand the Catholic faith fully, thank you very much.*

*Thank you for your efforts. Everything you sent is worthy of attentive reading and reflecting. God bless you.  
(from Nhatrang, Vietnam)*

*This is just to let you*

*know I received the DVD yesterday. Thank you for everything, keep up your great work and let us be united in prayer. God bless.  
(from Cáceres, Spain)*

*Although I only recently signed up for your updates, I have read them for years when they were forwarded to me by others. Thank you for your critical (and courageous) work and mission.*

*Thank you very much for all you have done for many years!! You have really safeguarded our families. We appreciate your work for the Church!*

*I love your website and all that's in it. You're doing so much for our Church and the family. Thank you and God bless.*

*I truly enjoy all your emails. It is wonderful to stay connected with like-minded people.*

*You are so on top of things... I am really blessed by the work you do. May God richly bless you for all*

*you do and all you are.*

*Thank you keeping us informed on these critical issues that face the Church. May God continue to bless you and this ministry.*

*Thank you for your faithfulness and generosity as you bring the truths of the Faith to parents and all those who seek the TRUTH. May God bless your efforts to bring authentic catechesis to us with great effectiveness!*

